

## Not so different after all?

### CEE in the European Parliament Elections 2019

#### Highlights

- *The EU member states in CEE (EU11) voted much more center-right, much less “Green” and about the same center-left and liberal as the EU28 average.*
- *The EU11 are not more Eurosceptic than their counterparts as far as number of seats per political groups in the European Parliament are concerned.*
- *Voter turnout in the EU11 was generally much lower than the EU average (save for Lithuania and Romania), but there is an increase in 10 out of 11 countries compared to 2014.*

**Marin Lessenski**

**Program Director, OSI-Sofia**

The EU members in the CEE region, which joined after 2004 (dubbed here the EU11), have been emulating their counterparts in the West for years. Some of them have become trendsetters in their own right, even though not always in the best light. The CEE region came to be associated with strong and vocal populist and Eurosceptic parties, intending to break or remake the EU in their own image. But not long after this, fellow-minded parties in the West stepped back in and stole the show on the both the continent proper and across the Channel.

The results of the May 2019 European Parliament elections<sup>1</sup> provide an opportunity to register the developments in Central and Eastern EU member states, which joined after 2004 (EU11) and to compare them to the trends across the rest of the EU. These observations might answer the question if the EU11 an outlier in the EU or the political developments reflect the overall trends in the EU? With over a quarter (26%) of the seats in the European Parliament, the trends in the EU11 EP2019 results can be important indicator for the next five years of EU politics.

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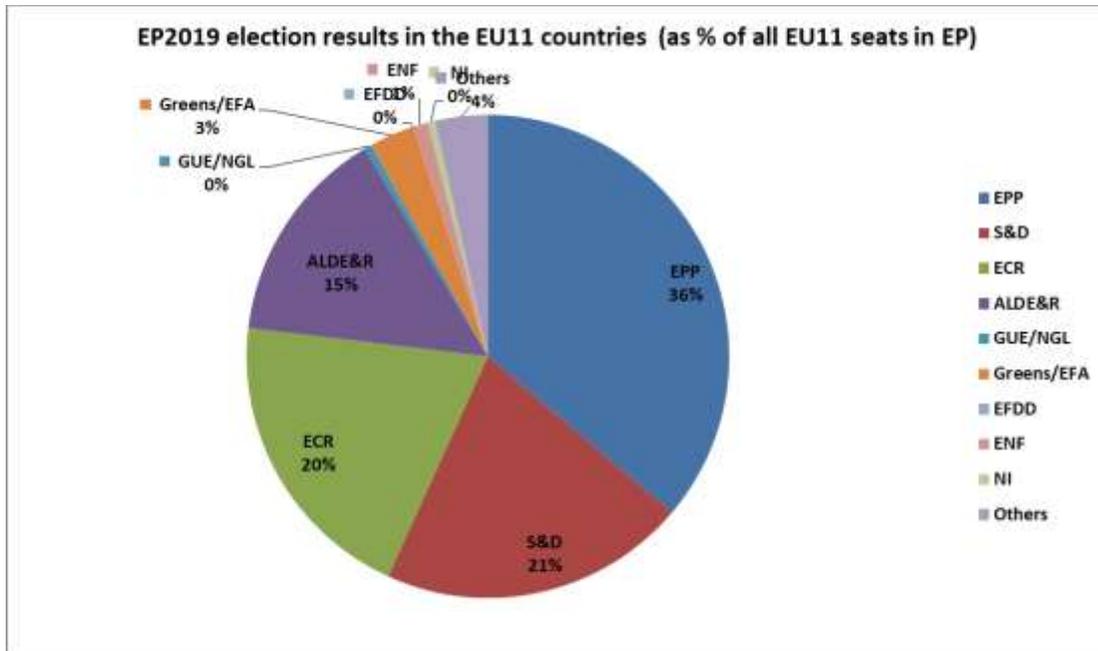
<sup>1</sup> The data used is based on the results available at <https://election-results.eu/>, a website of the European Parliament. All data used is no later than 10 June 2019.

**It’s not only the numbers that matter: some caveats**

There are important caveats to be noted in this analysis. Firstly, the results are viewed from the perspective of the political groups in the European Parliament. This does not account for the variety of opinions within the same group, so there are necessarily generalizations that omit specific cases. But most often than not, the political group positions inform and moderate the behavior of member parties. Hence, the analysis is based on the political groups’ overall positions. Secondly, some parties have more influence if they are in their national governments, but this does not concern the current analysis, focused on the EP elections. Finally, the other important note is that the cutoff date for the election results was June 10<sup>th</sup> and any subsequent changes are not registered.

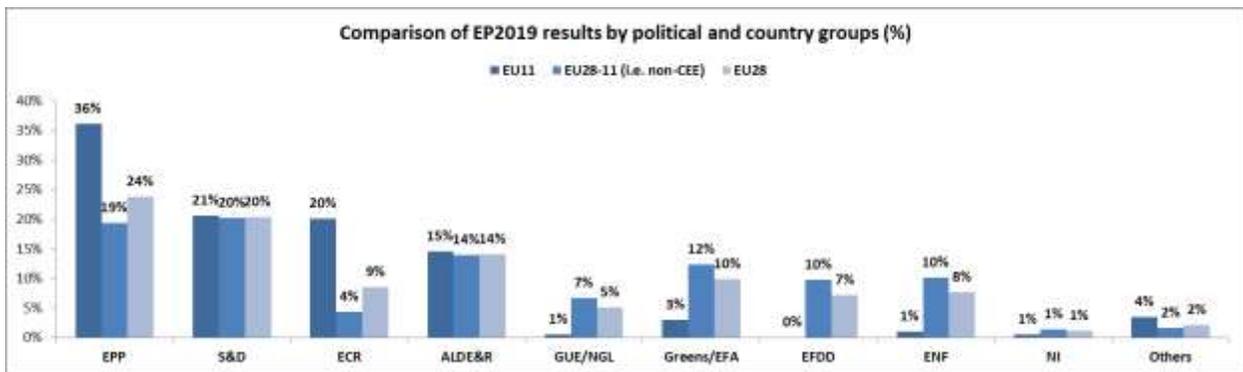
**The grass is indeed greener on the other side of the fence: what the results show**

The 2019 elections results showed that the center-right EPP<sup>2</sup> group emerged as the clear winner in the EU11 with 36%, compared to 21% for the center-left (S&D), 20% of the main Eurosceptic group (ECR) and the liberals in ALDE&R with 15%. The percentages show the seats of the EU11 countries - 199 out of the 751 total in the EP) - distributed in the respective political groups.



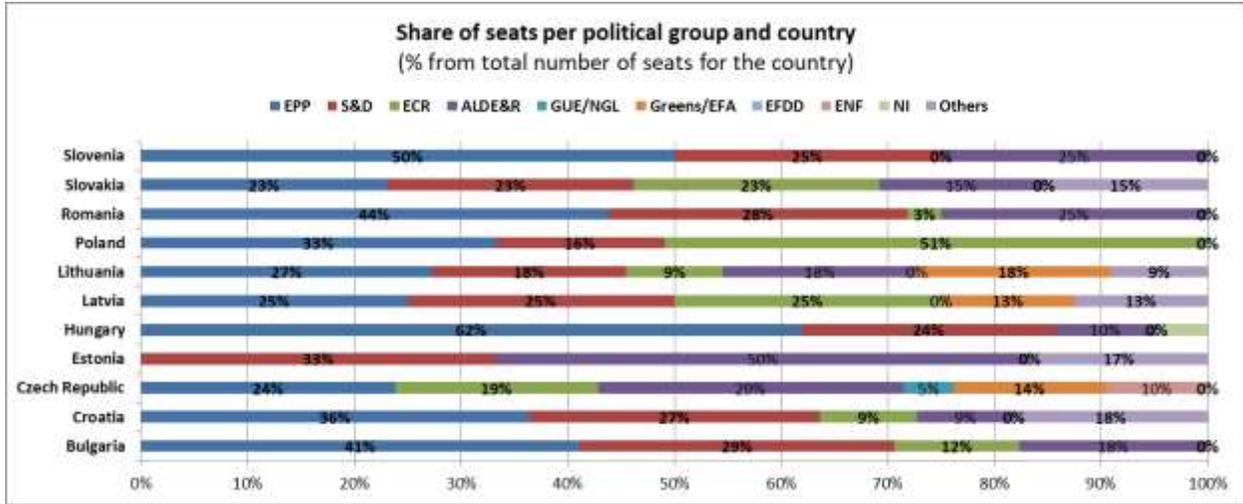
<sup>2</sup> Please, see the end of the text for full names and abbreviations of the political groups in the European Parliament.

The comparison to the overall EU28 results as well as to the rest (i.e. other than CEE, hence EU28 minus EU11) shows some interesting observations. The EPP performs by far better in the EP11 (36%) than the EU28 (24%) as a whole and the rest of the countries outside of the CEE region. The center-left S&D has all but uniform results in EU11 (21%) and the EU28 as a whole (20%). The liberal ALDE&R has 15% in the EU11 and 14% in total in the EU28. But the Greens barely register in EU11 with just 3%, compared to 10% for the EU28 and 12% in the rest of the countries. The Eurosceptic ECR high result is another major difference with 20% in EU11, compared to 9% in the overall EU28 result and just 4% in the rest of the EU. The far-left (GUE/NGL 1%) and the other Eurosceptic groups (EFDD 0%; ENF 1%) fare worse in the EU11 either.

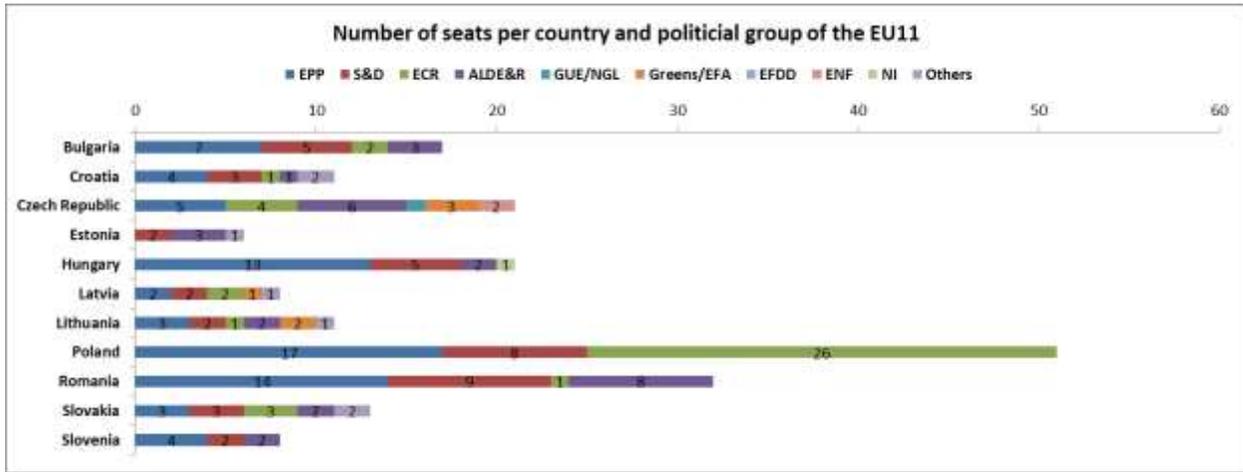


### Results of the political groups by country

The results of share of seats per political group and country as percentage of the total seats allocated for a given country, shows that the EPP is strongest in Hungary (62% of seats), followed by Slovenia (50%), Romania (44%) and Bulgaria (41%). The S&D parties are strongest in Estonia (33%), Bulgaria (29%) and Romania (28%). The ECR group is strongest in the Poland with 51% of the seats, but also in Latvia (25%), and the Czech Republic (19%). The Greens/EFA group is present by Lithuania (18%), Latvia (13%) and the Czech Republic (14%).



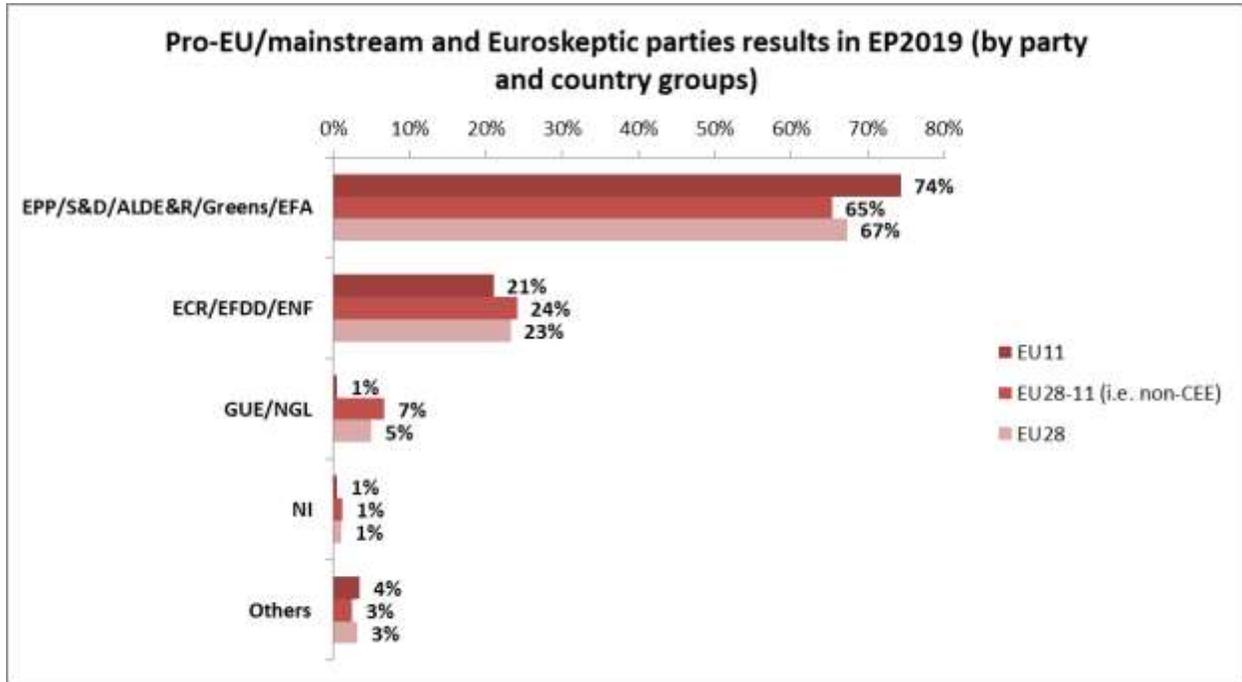
The distribution of number of seats per country and political group is shown in the graph below.



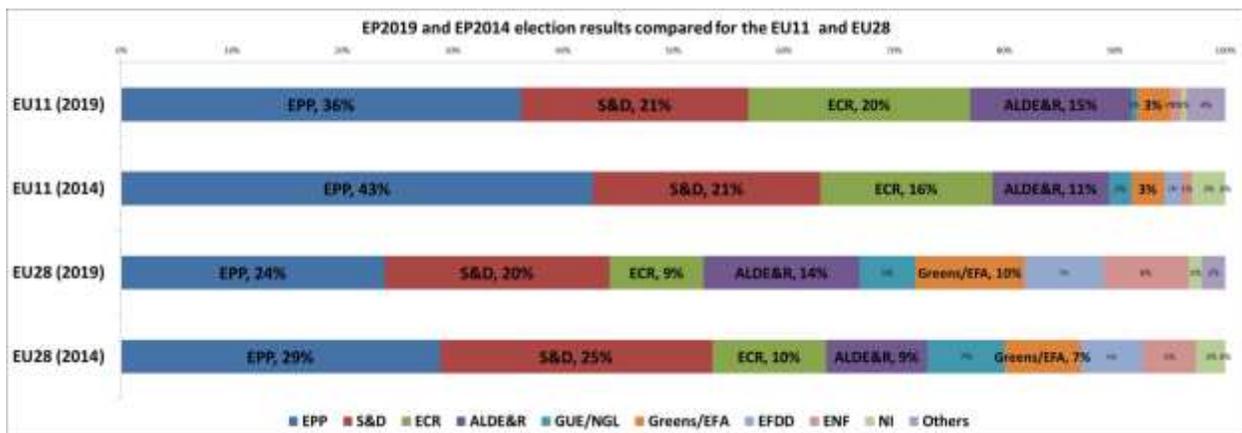
**The pro-EU and Eurosceptic camps compared**

It seems that the EU11 is almost as Eurosceptic and mainstream as the rest of the EU if the seats are lumped together. The main pro-EU groups (EPP/S&D/ALDE&R/Greens/EFA) make up for 73% of the seats in EU11, compared to 67% for the EU28 in total and 65% for the rest of the EU. The Eurosceptic party groups (ECR/EFDD/ENF) gather 21% of the seats in EU11, compared to 23% for the EU28 and 24% in the rest of the countries. The far-left GUE/NGL (with some Eurosceptic members itself) has only 1% in EU28. The non-attached members (NI) and others surely have Eurosceptic among themselves, but their shares are very low in the EU11 – 1% and 5% respectively. I.e. judging only by the numbers and not

considering individual parties or MEPs behavior, the EU11 is slightly more mainstream and nearly as Eurosceptic than the rest of the EU.



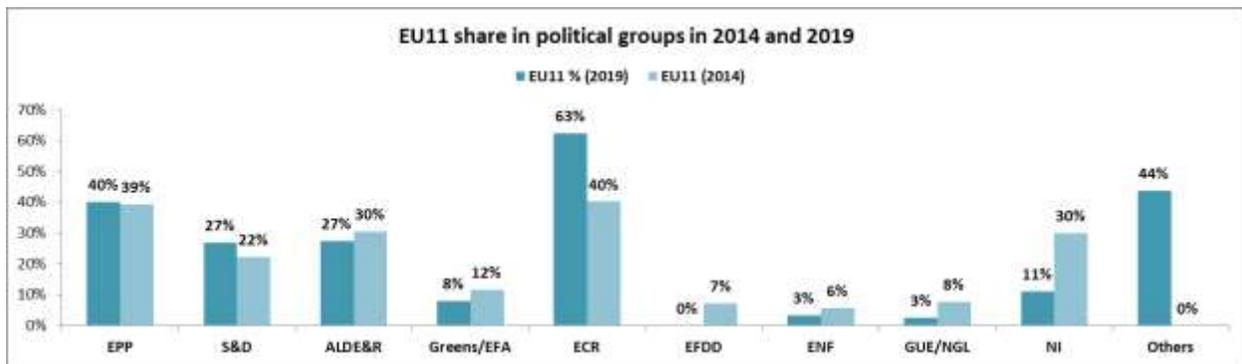
The EP2019 and EP2014 results compared



With regard to the EU11 results, the comparison between the EP2019 and EP2014 shows the center-right EPP decreased its share by nearly 7% - from 43% in 2014 to 36% in 2019. The center-left S&D has maintained its share – 21%. The Eurosceptic ECR increased its share to 20% in 2019 from 16% in 2014.

Likewise, the liberal ALDE increased to 15% in 2019 from 11% in 2014. The Greens/EFA remained one of the smallest groups with 3%, on the level of 2014.

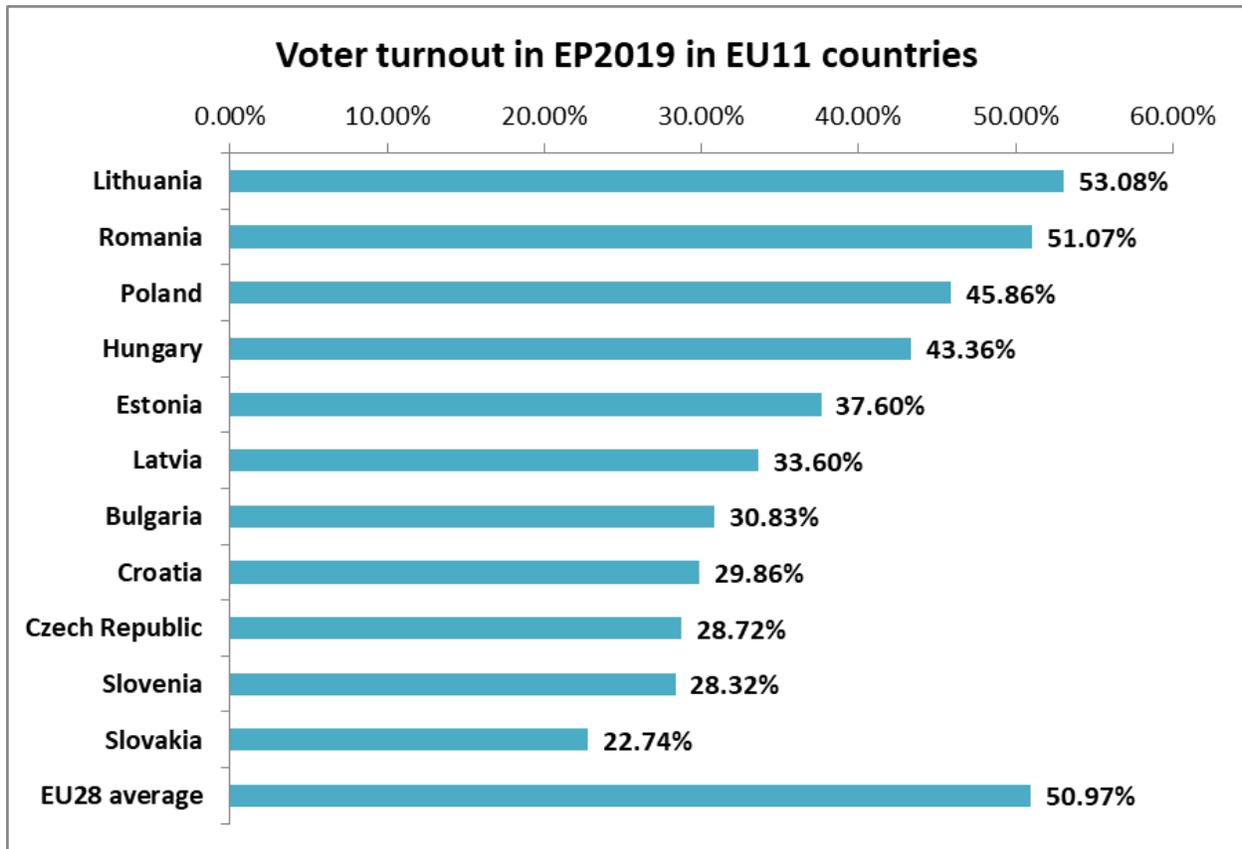
In 2019, compared to the trends in the EU28 as a whole the EPP share has decreased too to 24%, the S&D has decreased to 20%, ALDE&R has increased to 14% and the Greens/EFA to 9% and the Eurosceptic ECF decreased to 9% in 2019 from 10% five years ago.



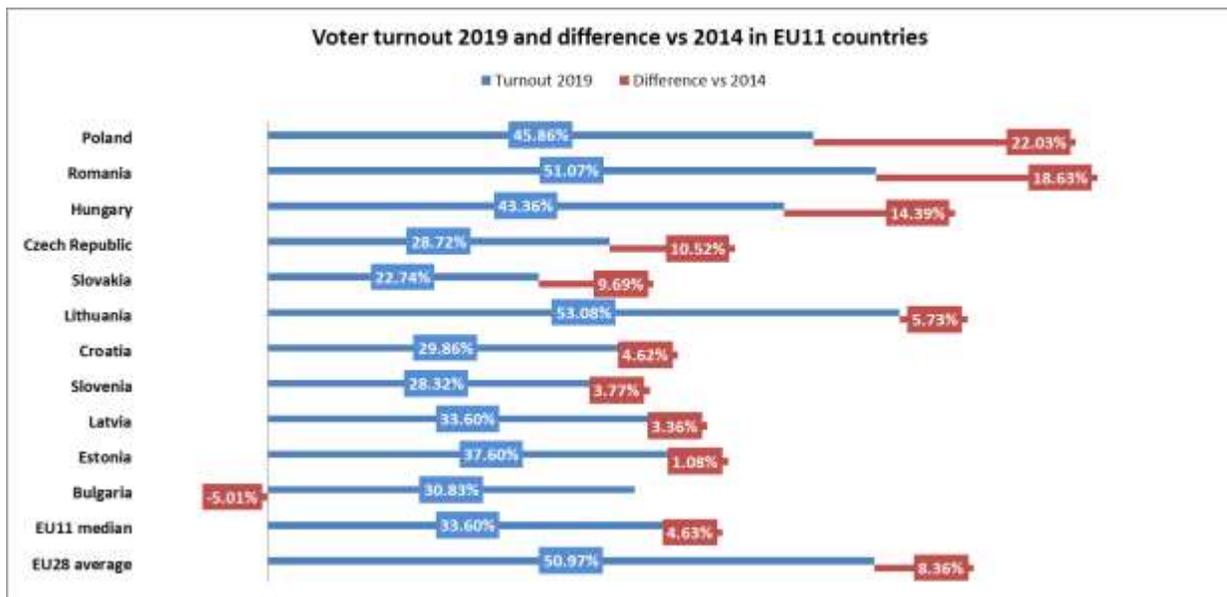
In terms of share of EU11 MEPs in the different political groups, they dominate in the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) with 63%, increasing considerably up from 40% in 2014 (this is due to the Polish PiS). The EPP group follows with 40% share of EU11 MEPs, up from 39% in 2014 and ALDE&R with 27% - down from 30% in 2014. The share of EU11 MEPs decreased in the Greens/EFA group to 8%, down from 12% in 2014. The EU11 have still a high share of 'others', i.e. still not allied to any of the political groups (44% of the total 'others' in the EU28).

## Voter turnout

Voter turnout is generally lower in the EU11 than the EU28 average. Lithuania and Romania are the exceptions with 53.08% and 51.07% respectively compared to 50.97% of EU28. Slovakia has by far the lowest turnout with 22.74%.



But even if the turnout in 2019 is lower than the rest of the EU, compared to 2014 the turnout actually increased in 10 out of the 11 countries in focus. The increase was the highest in Poland (with 22.03% compared to 2014), Romania (with 18.63%) and Hungary (with 14.39%). Only in Bulgaria 2019 turnout decreased with -5.01% compared to 2014



### Political groups in the European Parliament

- **EPP** - Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
- **S&D** - Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
- **ECR** - European Conservatives and Reformists Group
- **ALDE&R** - Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe + Renaissance + USR PLUS
- **GUE/NGL** - Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left
- **Greens/EFA** - Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
- **EFDD** - Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group
- **ENF** - Europe of Nations and Freedom Group
- **NI** - Non-attached Members



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#### About the author

Marin Lessenski is Program Director at the Open Society Institute – Sofia.

#### About EuPI

The European Policy Initiative (EuPI) of Open Society Institute – Sofia aims to contribute to improving the ability of new member states to effectively impact common European policies through good quality research, policy recommendations, networking and advocacy. The initiative operates in the eleven new member states from CEE through a network of experts and policy institutes.

#### Contact

Address:

56 Solunska Str.

Sofia 1000

Tel.: (+359 2) 930 66 19

Fax: (+359 2) 951 63 48

E-mail: [mlessenski@osi.bg](mailto:mlessenski@osi.bg)

Web: [www.osis.bg](http://www.osis.bg)